

Mosquito-borne chikungunya virus still a concern for American travelers, CDC says

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Painful infection is common in Caribbean, and Central and South America.

(HealthDay)—Americans traveling to the Caribbean and Central and South America this winter need to be aware that an outbreak of the mosquito-borne disease chikungunya continues to spread in those areas, U.S. federal health officials said Thursday.

There is no vaccine or treatment for the infection, according to the U.S. Centers for Disease Control and Prevention. Chikungunya causes symptoms such as fever and joint pain, although it's rarely fatal.

The outbreak began last December, and there had been about 795,000 cases of [chikungunya](#) in 37 countries and territories since the end of October, the CDC reported.

As of Nov. 4, more than 1,600 travelers had returned to the United States with chikungunya since the start of the outbreak. Typically, about

28 Americans return home with chikungunya each year, the CDC experts noted.

It's likely that the disease will continue to pose a risk to travelers to these regions for the rest of the year and beyond, according to the CDC, with about 9 million Americans traveling to the Caribbean annually.

"The beginning of fall means that mosquito problems in the continental United States will be decreasing. However, travelers to areas where the chikungunya outbreak continues are at risk of becoming infected. It is important that travelers understand these risks and take appropriate actions to prevent being bitten by mosquitoes," Roger Nasci, chief of the CDC's Arboviral Diseases Branch, said in an agency news release.

Travelers should use insect repellent and wear long-sleeved shirts and long pants during the day, and stay in air-conditioned or well-screened rooms at night, the CDC advised. If you use sunscreen, apply [insect repellent](#) after the sunscreen.

People more likely to develop severe symptoms if they become infected with chikungunya include those older than 65 and those who have arthritis, high blood pressure, heart disease or diabetes, according to the CDC. These high-risk people should discuss their travel plans with their doctor before leaving.

Along with fever and joint pain, chikungunya can cause muscle aches, headache, joint swelling or rash. Joint pain caused by chikungunya can be severe and debilitating, the CDC explained. Travelers who return from areas with chikungunya activity who have symptoms of the disease should seek medical care and inform their doctor about their recent trip.

The [chikungunya virus](#) is not spread between people, according to the CDC, and most people get better in about a week. However, some

people will have long-term [joint pain](#) as a result of the infection.

People who've been infected are believed to have lifelong immunity against the [disease](#), CDC experts noted .

More information: The U.S. Centers for Disease Control and Prevention has more about [chikungunya](#).

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